## A CHRISTMAS STORY—By Eleanor Hallowell Abbott

Flame who stole that night to her father's study and perched herself high on the arm of his chair with her cheek snuggled close

"Father," said Flame, "did you ever in your life know any one who had ever spent Christmas just the way he wanted to?

did." considered her father. "When table loomed a big, brown turkey; at you're little, of course, you have to the other the appropriate vegetables spend the day the way your elders Pies, cakes and doughnuts interwant you to! And when you're old spersed themselves between. Green enough to go courting," he sighed, wreaths steaming with scarlet rib-"your lady love's sentiments are outraged if you don't spend the day with her, and your own family are furious if you don't spend the day with them! And after you're married?" he sank back into his cushions. "N-o, no one, I suppose, has ever spent Christman just exactly the way he wanted

Well, I," triumphed Flame, "have the one chance perhaps in a lifetime, it would seem! And now mother has gone and wished me on Aunt Minna instead! Oh, father, dearie!" implored Flame, "couldn't you please persuade mother that--

With a crisp flutter of skirts Flame's mother, herself, appeared abruptly in the door.

"Why, wherever in the world have you people been?" she cried. "Didn't you hear the telephone? Couldn't you even hear me calling? Your Uncle Wally is worse! That is, he's better, but he thinks he's worse! And they want us to come at once! It's something about a new will! They've sent an automobile for us! It will be here any minute! But whatever in the world shall we do about Flame?" she cried distractedly. "You know how Uncle Wally feels about having young people in the house! And she can't possibly go to Aunt Minna's till tomorrow! And-"

\* \* \* \* BUT, you see, I'm not going to Aunt Minna's," announced Flame quite sedately. "Father says I don't have to! Of course, you didn't say

"But you felt it." "Not go to your Aunt Minna's?" gasped her mother. "What do you want to do?"

"I want to make a Christmas for myself! Oh, of course, I know perfectly well," Flame agreed, "that I could go to a dozen places in the parish, and be cry-babled over. But if I made a Christmas of my own everything about it would be brand-

new and unassociated!" "Honk-honk!" screamed the motor at the door.

"Oh, dear me, whatever in the world shall I do?" cried Flame's mother. "I'm almost distracted! I'm---"When in doubt," suggested Flame' father genially, "choose the most doubtful doubt on the docket and-Flame's got a pretty level head," he interrupted himself. "No young girl has a level heart,

asserted Flame's mother. "I'm so worried about the Lay Reader." "Lay Reader?" murmured her

father. "Why, yes. Just what kind of a Christmas is it, Flame, that you want to make?" He turned at the moment to force his wife's arms into the sleeves of her fur coat. "I-I want to make a Surprise for

Miss Flora," Flame confided. "Honk-honk!" urged the automo

"At the Rattle-Pane House, yo know!" rallied Flame. "Don't you remember that I called there this after-

"Honk-honk-honk!" implored the "But who is this Miss Flora?" cried

her mother. "How do we know she's respectable?" "Oh, my dear," deprecated Flame's

"Just as though the owners of the Rattle-Pane House would rent it to any one who wasn't respectable! "Oh, she's very respectable," insist-

With a furious yank of the doorhell Uncle Wally's chauffeur announced that the limit of his endurance had been reached. "Oh, p-l-e-a-s-e!" implored Flame

"Will you promise not to see the Lay Reader?" bargained her mother. 'Yes'm." said Flame. \* \* \* \*

WAKING at dawn, two single thoughts consumed Flame-the

Lay Reader and the humplest of the express packages downstairs. "As long as I've promised most

faithfully not to see 'Bertrand the Lay Reader," she laughed, "how can I possibly go to church? For the first Christmas in my life," she laughed, "I won't have to go to She tore back the wrappings of the

humpiest package with eager hands, only to find-a gay, gauzy layer of animal masks nosing interrogatively up at her. No identifying card!

Perhaps a donation for the Sunday. school Christmas tree? But there wasn't going to be any tree! "U-mm-m," mused Flame, "whatever in the world shall I do with them?" Then quite abruptly she sank back on her heels and laughed. But even to herself she did not say just what she

was laughing at. Taken all in all, it was a Christma morning of works! Kitchen works mostly! Useful, flavorous adventures with a turkey! A somewhat nervous sally with a pie! A few experiments with flour paste! A flare or two with It as 4 o'clock before she was even

a paint brush! An errand to the attic! ready to start for the Rattle-Pane House with a sledful of miscellaneous Christmas goods. She had to make three tugging trips. And each start was delayed by her big gray pussy cat stealing out to try to follow her. Reader. "Just till we got this mys-And each arrival complicated by the tery straightened out." yelpings and leapings and general cavortings of four dogs who wanted to escape from the shed yard. With

the third arrival finally accomplished the crafty cat stood waiting for her on the steps of the Rattle-Pane House -back arched, fur bristled, spitting at the storm in the shed yard, and Just fun-and as long as mother and had to be thrust into a covered basket father had to go away, anyway-

wards of tinsel. The door key was exactly where barn and a private chapel and a colthe old butler had said it would be- lection of Chinese lanterns and a pie under the doormat-and the key itself turned astonishingly cordially in Mother, of course, thinks we ought the rusty old lock. The four dog to have the corn barn. But father dishes, heaping to the brim, loomed can't decide between the Chinese lanin prim line upon the kitchen table.

"U-m-m." sniffed Flame. "Noth- ally," she sighed, "I'm hoping for the

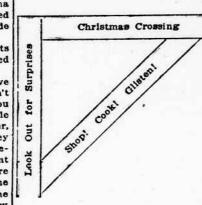
and started to work.

serted house?'

By 5 o'clock the faded yellow kitchen must have looked very strange | deserted house," she explained. even to a dog. Straight down its dingy, wabbly floored center stretched Lay Reader. cloth. Quaint, high-backed chairs, | mine, and-" dragged in from the shadowy parlor, bons hung nonchalantly about. Tin sel garlands shone on the walls. Conspicuously placed above the rusty stovepipe stretched the parish's gift motto, duly readjusted:

"PEACE on EARTH, Good Will to DOGS."

In the doorway opposite reared a hastily constructed pasteboard mim icry of a railroad crossing sign to



Stepping aside for a moment to study the full effect of her handiwork. life smote sharply across her senses, namely, that the instant you find party that I'm having." yourself absolutely alone with a really good time you begin to hunt about for somebody very special to share it with you! it with your mouth," admitted Flame

"Maybe that's always the way things happen when you get your own way about something else," she mused. Like a blast from the arctic, the

Christmas twilight swept in on her as she opened the shed door. "Come, Beautiful-Lovely!" she implored. "Come, Lopsy! Miss Flora!

Come, Blunder-Blot!" Leaping, loping, four abreast, they came plunging like so many north winds to their party. Yelpingmouthed, slapping-tailed! Backs oristling! Hurtling, crowding!

"Oh, dear me, dear me!" struggled Flame. "Maybe a carol would calm

To a certain extent a carol surely did. Cocking their ears to the old quite idiotically. sound.

"Oh, what a glorious lark!" quivered Flame. "What a-a lonely, glor- I'm-I'm afraid they'll stampede it!" ous lark!"

Timidly at first, but with increasng abandon, the clear young soprano voice took up its playful paraphrase: "God rest you, merrie-animals! Let nothing you dismay!

At this moment Beautiful-Lovely,

"Wow-wow-wow! W-w--ow-w-w-00-W-w-w-w!" As Flame's hands dropped from the

the door.

"What is it? What is it!" shouted familiar voice. "Whatever in the world is happening? Let me in!"

"Sil-ly!" hissed Flame through crack in the door, "it's nothing but a

party! Don't you know, 2-2 party Flame. when you hear it?" "Bertrand the Lay Reader" relaxed n a gasp of astonishment.

"Why-why, is that you, Miss Flame?" he gasped. "Why, I thought t was a murder! Why-why, what- tated an instant probably to be torn ever in the world are you doing by Hindu lions, saw no conceivable chair back. here?" "I-I'm having a party!" hissed

Flame through the keyhole "A-a-party!" stammered the Lay Reader. "Open the door!"

"No, I-can't!" said Flame. "Why not" demanded the Lay Reader.

"I just can't!" she admitted, a bi weakly. "It wouldn't be convenient. -I've got trouble with my eyes."

"Trouble with your eyes? Please open the door ! I've been looking for you everywhere," urged the Lay Reader. "At the senior warden's! At all the vestrymen's houses! I thought surely I'd find you at your own house.

But I found only sled tracks." "That was me—I," mumbled Flame. "And then I heard these awful creams!" shuddered the Lay Reader. "That was a carol," said Flame.

"A carol?" scoffed the Lay Reader 'Open the door!"

"Well-just a crack," conceded Flame. It was astonishing how a man as broad-shouldered as the Lay Reader could pass so easily through a crack. Conscience-stricken, Flame fled before him with her elbow crooked

across her forehead. "Oh, my eyesmy eyes!" she cried. "Well, really," puzzled the Lay Reader. "I had never suspected my-

self of being actually dazzling!" "Oh," explained Flame, "it's just my promise. I promised mother not to er's heels, a prod of paws in his stom-

see you!" "We might tie my big handkerchief across your eyes," suggested the Lay

With the big white hankerchief tied

firmly across her eyes, Flame's last scruple vanished. "Well, you see," she began precipitately, "I did think it would be such fun to have a party all my own

No parish in it at all! Or good works and lashed down with yards and You see," she confided, "Uncle Wally's making a new will. There's a corn bald pony principally under dispute

terns and the private chapel. Person-

"Yes-but this-party?" prodded the

to plump up the chairs. The

would do," reluctantly, "Only diction-

"Oh, but, you see, it isn't exactly a For a single moment more Flame

took another peek at the table. "Who lives here?" demanded the "Set a chair for yourself directly opposite me!" she ordered. "And "Perfect!"



FLAME TOOK ONE BLANK GLANCE AT HIM AND BURST FORTH INTO A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM.

person-strangling!" "Strangling?" giggled Flame. "Oh,

"Will they bite?"

"Only if you don't trust them," confided Flame.

"But it's so hard to trust a dog that will bite you if you don't trust Only please-please-hurry!" him." frowned the Lay Reader. It was Flame's turn now to wine

back a little. "I-I hate people who hate dogs!" she cried out abruptly.

"OH, I don't hate them," lied the Lay Reader like a gentleman. "I tell you I like dogs-good dogs! I from her eyes, dashed to the door assure you I'm very-oh, very much and hello'd to the fast retreating figinterested in this dog party of yours! ure. "Oh, Bertrand! Bertrand!" she If I could be of any possible assist ance?" he implored.

"Maybe you could be. There is a problem." admitted Flame. "Five Hurry!" problems, to be perfectly accurate. Four dogs, and a cat." "And a cat?" echoed the Lay Reader

"The table is set," affirmed Flame plano's quavering treble notes, snort- "But I don't know how to get the ing their nostrils through its gritty, dogs into their chairs! They run guttural basses, they watched Flame's around so! They yelp! They jump! her white sleeves without further infacile fingers sweep from sound to They haven't had a mouthful to eat, trospection, and dragged out from the And when they once see the turkey

who had dined that day on corned fatuously up at her.

Extra piles and piles of mush, be- can't help resting her.' for Christmas a turkey would taste so good!" "It certainly would," conceded the

Lay Reader. "So, if you'd help me," wheedled plano, startled fists beat furiously on Flame, "it would be well worth staying blindfolded for. Otherwise," murmured Flame with a faint gesture to-

ward the door. "I will help you," said the Lay Reader.

"Where is your hand?" fumbled

"Here!" attested the Lay Reader "Lead us to the dogs!" commanded

Flame. Bertrand Laurello, who, for the cause he served, wouldn't have hest-

reason at the moment for being eaten by dogs at a purely social function "This-this mush that you speal of?" he questioned. "With the dogs as-as nervous as you say- Don' you think that perhaps a little must served first, a good deal of mush, would say, served first, might act as

a—as a sort of anesthesia?" "Lead us to the-mush," said Flame.

The door knob turned in his hand and the cheerful kitchen lamplight, glitter of tinsel, flare of red ribbons, savor of foods, smote sharply on him. "Oh. I say, how jolly!" cried the Lay Reader.

"Get the mush," said Flame. "It's there on the table by the window. Please set all four dishes on the floor -each dish in a separate corner. And then open the parlor door, or maybe I'd better," conceded Flame. "Lead me to it."

sucked at the crack in the door. "Woof! Woof!" roared the big wolfhound.

"Slam! Bang! Slash!" slapped th Dalmatian's crisp weight.

"Yi! Yi! Yi!" sang the bulldog "Hush! Hush, dogs!" implored Flame. "This is father's Lay Reader! "Your-Lay Reader!" contradicted

teeth in them came hurtling through! With a single sniff at the Lay Readach, the onslaught swerved-and passed. Guzzlingly from four separate tion from his kitchen windows and corners of the room issued sounds of by the unprecedented aroms of fir

Reader, and lifted the bandage. Bulg-"O-h," crooned Flame. "How

gested blithely, "if you'll get the "Bibles?" stiffened the Lay Reader. "Bibles? Why, really, Miss Flame, I

couldn't countenance any sort of mock service. Even just for-for quaintness - even for Christmas quaintness!"

seats, you see, are too low for the young voice. "I thought my hair Oh. I suppose dictionaries

kitchen. "You'll have to go over to gobbler! A giraffe stepping suddenly "Dogs!" winced the Lay Reader, my house and get them-Mr. Lau- forward with-with dog paws thrust the window-some way," worried rousing cautiously from his cushions! Flame. "I've mislaid my key here A parrot with a twitching black-and-

> "If I hurry enough," said the Lay Reader quite impulsively, "may I have a kiss when I get back?" "A kiss?" hooted Flame. In the

and sped out into the night. Flame dragged down the bandage called. "If you don't find 'em in the pantry you'd better go up in mother's room and turn out the silver chest!

Rallying back to the bright Christmas kitchen, an accusing blush rose to the spot where the dimple had

"Oh. shucks!" parried Flame. "I kissed a bishop before I was five! you see, since last night this time! shadow of the sink the "humpiest" box. The clumsy cover slid off, ex-"Turkey?" quizzed the Lay Reader, muslin layer of animal masks leering

"Poor Miss Flora must be so tired "Oh, of course, mush was what they of being so plain," she thought. "I'll were intended to have," admitted give her the first choice of every-Flame. "Piles and piles of mush! thing! Something really-lovely! It

cause it was Christmas day! But She selected for Miss Flora a Candon't you think mush does seem a bit ary's face. Softly yellow! Its swellmuzzle lifted, eyes rolling, jabbed his dull?" she questioned appealingly, ing, tender muslin throat fairly reeking with the suggestion of innocent song! Nudging Miss Flora cautiously from her sonorous nap, Flame beguiled her with half a doughnut to her appointed chair, boosted her still cautiously to her pinnacle of books. and slipped the Canary's beautiful blond countenance over her grizzled

Miss Flora sat blinking beadily out through the canary's yellow-rimmed eye sockets with frank curiosity toward such proceedings as were about to follow. It was easy to see she was accustomed to sitting in chairs. For the wolfhound Flame chose a giraffe's head. Beautiful-Lovely resigned himself to the inevitable, and lolled his fine height against the mahogany

To Blunder-Blot, the trim Dalmatian, Flame assigned the parrot's head, arrogantly beaked, gorgeously

variegated, altogether querulous.

pink-eared visage. head toward the woodshed, Flame could not be perfectly sure whether

of conscience. And pile a few extra books. I'm al-

\* \* \* \*

TN five minutes the deed was accomherself slumping soggily on a great away and- And I did so love your pile of book staring down as best she dogs! And I did so want to make might through the bengal tiger's ear one Christmas in the world just exat the weirdest assemblage of animals actly the way I wanted it!" which any domestic cat had ever been

nother doughnut in two and drew all the dogs' attention to herself.

shaken the reason of a less sober their master's chair. young man. Startled by the unwonted illumina-

front door, he groped through the dingy hall and beheld the gallowsing mush, the four dogs lay at rest. like structure reared in the kitchen doorway. "My God!" he ejaculated. "Barret

is getting ready to hang himself! Gone mad, probably—or something!" He forced himself to the object to ote, with increasing bewilderment, the cheerful phrasing: "Christmas Crossing'?" he repeated blankly. Look Out for Surprises? 'Shop! Cook! Glisten!" Throwing all caution aside, he passed the buffet and plunged into the kitchen.

vould be white before you came!" He stopped short in his tracks to Obediently the Lay Reader built bright table! The absolutely formal

a faint scuffle, the horrid sound of a mouth wilted. "Why-why, I've for- girl-with her dark hair forty years gotten the carving knife and fork!" this side of white-begging him to she cried out in real distress. "Oh, hurry! A black velvet bag sur- roared imperiously. "And the house that is just the sound of Miss Flora's how stupid of me!" Without avail mounted by a tiger's head stirring guaranteed 'furnished'?" Very furnthe first psychological puzzle of her 'girlish glee!' Miss Flora is a-a dog. she searched through all the drawers strangely in a chair piled high with ously he began to hunt all around the I neglected to state that this is a dog and cupboards of the Rattle-Pane books! A canary as big as a turkey kitchen. rello! You'll have to climb in through into his soup plate! A white rabbit dead things. Pressed flowers! And at the junction that we made conamong all these dishes and boxes. white short-haired tail! An empty chair facing the girl! An empty stranger. "And I came here to forget chair facing the girl!

In another instant he had slipped into the vacant seat. misfortunes," murmured Flame. "So sorry to have kept you wait-

ing," he murmured. from her eye, took one blank glance at the stranger, and burst forth into a blood-curdling scream!

As though waiting only for that one signal to break the spell of their enchantment, the Canary leaped upward and grabbed the Bengal Tiger by his muslin nose: the White Rabbit sprang to "point" on the cooling turkey, and time," said Flame. "If you'd turn the the Red-and-Green Parrot fell to the floor in a desperate effort to settle once and for all with the black spot that itched so impulsively on his left shoulder!

Lost to all sense of honor or table manners, the benign-faced Giraffe burst through his own neck with a most curious anatomical effect, locked his teeth in the Parrot's gray throat, and rolled with him under the table in mortal combat. From her terrorized perch on

back of her chair, Flame watched the fracas with dilated eyes. Hunched in the hug of his own arms the stranger sat rocking himself to and fro in uncontrollable, choking mirth-"ribald mirth" was what

Flame called it. It was not until the Black Plush Bag at bay had ripped a red streak down Miss Flora's avid dreamed of inviting guests!" nose that he rose to interfere. Very definitely then, with quick deeds, incisive words, he separated the immediate combatants and ordered the other dogs into submission.

"Here you, Demon Direful," he addressed the white Wolfhound. "Drop that, Orion!" he shouted to the Irish setter. "Cut it out, John!" he thunlered at the coach dog.

"Their names are Beautiful-Lovely!" cried Flame, "and Lopsy and

Blunder-Blot!" The stranger stared with frank astonishment.

"Their names are what?" he said. In an instant Flame had jumped rom her retreat to the floor. "Who are you, anyway?" she de-

manded. "How dare you come here like this? Butting into my party! And-spoiling my discipline with the logs! Who are you, I say?" "Who am I?" he said. "Why, no

one special at all except just-the Master of the House!" "What?" gasped Flame. "Earle Delcote." bowed the stranger. "Why-why, but Mr. Delcote is an

old man," she gasped. sure he's an old man." The smile on the stranger's mouth pread suddenly to his eyes.

"Not yet-thank God!" he bowed. Flame sank limply down in her seat again and gestured toward the empty place opposite her.

"HAVE a-have a chair," she stammered. "Oh, I-I know I oughn't to be here," she struggled. "It's thethe cheekiest thing that any girl in the world ever did! But your butler plished. The astonished cat found said- And he did so want to go

> back into his chair. "Have a heart!" he said. Flame did not accept this sugges-

tion. With downcast eyes she sat marauder crawling in through the Thus it was that the master of the staring at the table. It seemed a rectory window. He saw him fumbled upon a scene that might have all the dogs grouped blatantly around right, all through the front hall. He "I can at least have my Cat." thought, "my-faithful Cat!" In an-

other instant she had extracted poor Puss from a clutter of pans in the perch on one arm of the high-backed chair. "Th-ere!" said Flame.

"I'm afraid everything is very "Not for anything," laughed the stranger quite suddenly, "would I

have kept you waiting-if I had only

known. girl's cheeks. "It was not for you I was waiting,"

whom, then? Some incredible wight who, worse than late-isn't going to show up at all? Heaven-sent, I constare at the scene before him. The sider myself. How else could so little a girl have managed so big a tur-

"There-isn't any-carving knife." "What? No carving knife?" he

old plush bags! And pressed flowers! And-and pressed flowers!" "Great heavens!" groaned the

'dead things'!" "Your-your butler said you'd had

"Misfortunes!" rallied the stranger. "I should think I had! In a single Flame yanked the handkerchief year I've lost health, money-most everything I own in the world except my man and my dogs." "They're good dogs," testified Flame.

"And the doctor sent me here for

six months," persisted the stranger, "before he'll even hear of my plunging into things again!" "Six months is a-a good long hems, we could make yellow curtains for the parlor in no time at all!"

ong time since any dogs lived in the Rattle-Pane House.' "Rattle-Brain House?" bridled the tranger. "Rattle-Pane House," corrected

"W-we?" stammered the stranger.

"M-mother," said Flame. "It's a

The stranger returned to his seat. "I shall have to rend the turkey instead of carving it." he said. "Rend it," acquiesed Flame.

Flame.

In the midst of the rending a frown appeared between the stranger's eyes. "These-these guests that you were expecting " he questioned.

"Oh, you mean-Bertrand?" flushed "Oh, truly, I didn't invite Flame.

you!" "Same as-I?" stammered the

stranger. "Well," floundered Flame, "wellou know what I mean-The master of the house fixed his eyes on the knotted white handkerchief which Flame had thrown across be corner of her chair.

"And is this 'Bertrand' person soso dazzling," he questioned, "that human eye may not look safely upon his countenance?"

sudden friendliness, "it was only that him. So, of course, when he butted in

house. "And some people talk about a country village being dull in the evening!" Flame jerked her chair back from the

"A-a robbery at the rectory!" she gasped. "Why-why, I'm the rectory! I must go home at once!"

then, when he was caught."

"That was Bertrand!" said "my father's lay reader." It was the man's turn now to jum

said Flame. From the outside door the sound of furious knocking occurred suddenly. "That sounds to me like-like par

the young stranger in the dark hall. "I'l try not to," quivered Flame. They were both right. It was par

warm, balsam-scented Rattle-Panel faintly inscrutable, faintly smiling it House with a gust of frost, a threat of seemed suddenly to the young Master disaster.

"F-lame!" sighed her father. "Flame!" scolded her mother.

"Flame!" implored the Lay Reader. "What a pretty name!" beamed the master of the house. "Pray be seated, pink. Like a person in a dream she everybody," he gestured graciously to turned back to her mother. There was left and right. "This is certainly a a smile on her face, the smile of a very great pleasure, I assure you," he dreaming person. affirmed distinctly to Miss Flamanda! "No-mother," she said, "I haven't Nourice. "Returning quite unex- seen Bertrand-today." pectedly to my new house this lonely "Why, you're looking right at him Christmas evening," he explained very now!" protested her exasperated definitely to the Rev. Flamande mother. Nourice. "I can't express to you what here, Mr. Bertrand, "he beamed, "a feetly sure that she doesn't see him. young man of all your obligations

and-and complications-" "Pleasant-gathering of neighbors?" questioned Mrs. Nourice with some emotion.

"Oh, I forgot," deprecated the master of the house with real concern. "I was told at the railroad station how you and Mr. Nourice had been called away by the illness of a rela-

"We were called away," confided Mrs. Nourice with asperity, "by a very sick relative, to receive the present

of a piebald pony." "Oh, goody!" jumped Flame and collapsed again under her mother's glance.

"And then came this terrible man again. telephone message," shuddered her mother. "The implied dishonor of one of your father's most trusted-most trusted associates!"

lend it." "So we borrowed Uncle Wally's new automobile and started right for tiously along the floor.

prisoner." "His-victim," intercepted the Lay Reader coldly.

His mouth was twisted very slightly to one side. It gave him a rather this expression had been vocal inshocked his hearers. "Your father had to go on board

most unwilling to release him. Your and sending poor Mr. Laurellofather had to use every kind of argu-"Every-kind," mused her father. "He doesn't even deny being in the house," continued her mother, "being thought I saw a white string hangin my closet-being caught with a solid silver carving knife and fork in his hand. Yet all the time, he per-

sists," frowned Flame's mother, "that

there is some one in the world who

if only-he won't even say 'he' or 'she' but 'it'-if only 'it' would." A sudden flicker of suspicion darkened the mother's eyes.

"Is it remotely possible that after About-to-Happen! your promise to me-your sacred promise to me-" To the Lay Reader's face, and right and swung the sash upward! through the Lay Reader's face to the face of the master of the house

as I am, I never—never would have unaccountable impulse.

of the House that he had been wait-

ing all his discouraged years for just that glance. His heart gave the queerest jump. Flame's face turned suddenly very

With a gentle murmur of dissent it means to me to find this pleasant Flame's father stepped forward and gathering of neighbors waiting here laid his arm across the young girl's to welcome me! And when I think of shoulder. "She-she may be looking the effort you must have made to get at him," he said, "but I'm almost per-

> "Why, whatever in the world do you mean?" demanded his wife. "If there was only another woman here! A mature-sane woman! A-" With a flare of accusation she turned from Flame to the Master of the House "This Miss Flora that my daughter spoke of-where is she? I insist on seeing her! Please summon her instantly!"

Crossing genially to the table, the

Master of the House reached down and dragged out the bulldog by the brindled scruff of her neck. "This is-Miss Flora!" he said. Indignantly Flame's mother glanced

at the dog, and then from her daughter's face to the face of the young "Aud you call that-a lady?" she

demanded. "N-not technically," admitted the young man.

For an instant a perfectly tense si-"I was right in the midst of such lence reigned. Then from under a an interesting book," deplored her father. "And Uncle Wally wouldn't shadowy basket the Cat crept out, shining, sinuous, with extended paw, and began to pat a sprig of holly cau-

"Oh, it's furnished, all right," quiv-ered Flame. "It's just chockful of home," hurried her mother. "It was home," hurried her mother. "It was home," home, home, have made con-"We all," broke in the Master of the nections with the constable and his have experienced a slight twinge of irritability-the past few minutes. Hunger, I've no doubt! So suppose we all sit down together to this sumptuous-if somewhat chilled repast? After the soup certainly, even after unpleasant, snarling expression. If sure, will be-cheerfully and satisfac torily exchanged. Miss-Flame I know stead of muscular, it would have has a most amusing story to tell and-"

"Oh, yes!" rallied Flame. "And it's the train and identify him," persisted Flame's mother. "The constable was almost all about being blindfolded

"So, if by any chance, Mr.-Mr.

Bertrand," interrupted the Master of

the House a bit abruptly, "you hap-

pen to have the solid silver knife and fork still on your person- 1 ing-"I have!" said the Lay Reader with his first real grin. With great formality the Master of

the House drew back a chair and

can give a perfectly good explanation | bowed Flame's mother to it. Then suddenly the red setter lifted his sensitive nose in the air, and the spotted Dalmatian bristled faintly across the ridge of his back. Through "You don't know anything about the whole room, it seemed, swept a

this, do you, Flame?" she demanded. curious cottony sense of Something-With a little sharp catch of her

breath Flame dashed to the window "Mr. • • • Delcote!" she called. In an instant his slender form sil-"Oh, stop!" cried Flame. "Dreadful Flame's glance went homing with an houetted darkly with hers in the open

window against the eternal mystery

## Graduates of U. S. Colleges

In Delegation From China TT IS a significant fact that at gates, Dr. Wellington Koo is a Columleast half of the Chinese delegates and officials connected with Wang matriculated at Yale and Minister the delegation attending the con-

States, "their friend at court," and methods and were better posted in world affairs because of their years spent in the occident, is only a guess. It is well known that the highest positions in the administrative, judicial and executive branches of the Chinese government are practically monopolized by men with English or American univers to schooling, principally the latter, and it might have

out of the conference much better off than she came in, even though all of her demands are not acceded to, and a great part of whatever success will be their share will be due to the group of young leaders and advisers who were educated here. One thing was shown very clearly in the early days of the parley, that a great number of the officials were able to speak such good Eng-

been difficult to pick men qualified

for the work at the conference here

without including a majority of for-

able to get for their cause a vast amount of publicity that has proved invaluable. In 1900, following the Boxer re bellion, China paid an indemnity of \$12,000,000 to the United States, as she did to various other nations. America, in an unusually same and human moment, gave back this money to China to be used in sending bright and industrious Chinese boys to America to be educated. The continually growing friendly relations between the two nations has already proved the advisability of the gracious act. It is more evident than ever in the present conference, and it is expected to bear even greater fruit as China continues to grow into

a real power. There are here, representing China three plenipotentiary delegates, two superior advisers, five advisers, nineteer technical advisers, seven counselors, secretary general, an assistant secretary general, a secretariat composed of seventy-one members and eighteen translators, clerks, etc. Of this number between fifty-five and sixty, or nearly half, were graduated from American ents and the Lay Reader. All three universities and several others studied were breathless, all three excited, all at high schools or took special courses three reproachful, they swept into the here. Of the three plenipotentiary dele

Sze, after studying at Central High School in Washington, graduated from ference were educated in the United Cornell. Each of the three did some thing that was quite extraordinary for an oriental during his college career Dr. Koo was editor-in-chief of the Columbian Spectator, the college daily; Minister Sze was an editor of his university daily, the Cornellian, and Dr.

Wang graduated first in his class at the Dr. W. W. Yen, one of the advisers. has many of his former schoolmates living in this vicinity now, for he studied for two years at the Episcopal High School and later graduated from the University of Virginia, and in both places con many gold medals for English composition and debating. Chow Tse-Chi first of the Chinese students to come to America. He was a graduate of the old Columbian University here, since

and contests only to a very limited degree. Almost all of them devoted their time nearly exclusively to their studie and to literary work of one kind or another. Despite any possible handicap of language, practically all of them stood very high in their classes, and to be the possessor of a Phi Beta Kappa key is quite the general thing among them. One of the officials connected with the delegation, however, did distinguish himself as an athlete. Chung Mun-yew, an associate adviser, is crew and was instrumental in defeat There are about twenty of them here

Couldn't Oblige.

versities that are well represented in

the delegation are Princeton, Cornel

Chicago, Michigan, Wisconsin and Penn

"Dared the man who ran over nim

ing but mush! Mush!" She doffed piebald pony." her red tam and sweater, donned a

"Sniff-sniff-snort!" the red sette

In another instant four shapes with house, returning unexpectedly, stum- very cheerless table suddenly, with the young man gallantly.

joy and fulfillment. Flame turned her back to the Lay sweet! Now, Mr. Laurello," she sug-

BIBLES? All I want them for is

Chemistries on Sermons and Ancient food! A perfectly strange, blindfolded kay?"

curve of her cheek a dimple opened suddenly. "Well-maybe," said Flame. The Lay Reader snatched his hat

What's a lay reader?" She rolled up posing once more the gay-colored

For Lopsy, the crafty setter, she selected a white rabbit's artless, Yet out of the whole box of masks it had been the bengal tiger's flercely bewhiskered visage that had fascinated Flame the most. Cocking her

she heard a twinge of cat or a twinge "After all," she reasoned, "it would be easy enough to set another plate. most sure I saw a black plush bag

forced to'contemplate. Very diplomatically Flame broke

"Oh, do hurry!" cried an eager

The Master of the House slipped

The eyes of the stranger fixed speculatively on the big turkey. cold," she confided with formal re-

she said coldly.

and majesty of a Christmas night. "This 'guest,' then," frowned the WITH one elbow leaning casually And THEN the snow came! on the mantelpiece, his eyes (Copyright, 1921. All rights reserved.) him! He just butted in-same as

States. Whether or not the Chinese government chose men who, because "Bertrand - dazzling?" protested Flame. "Oh, no! He's really quite of their training in America, would dull. It was only," she explained with be closer in touch with the United I had promised mother not to 'see' better able to understand western

wintertime!" he chuckled. "With a dogs' masquerade and a robbery at the rectory all happening the same Grabbing her cat in her arms

OH, shucks!" shrugged the master of the house. "It's all over now. The constable and his prisoner are already on their way to the county seat, wherever that may be. The regular constable was off Christmasing somewhere, it seems, so he put a substitute on his job-a stranger from somewhere. Some substitute, that No mulling over hot toddies on Christmas night for him! He saw the bling now to the left, now to the followed him up the stairs to a close where the silver was evidently kept He caught the man red-handed, as i were. It seems there was a solid silver, very elaborate carving set which back of the cupboard, and brought the parish had just recently presented.

> to his feet. "What " he cried. "I sent him for the carving knife,"

ents' knocking," shivered Flame. "It sounds to me like an escaped Lay Reader," said her host. "Don't worry, little girl," whispered

Yale Law School.

mer American students. At any rate, it is believed that China will come superceded by George Washington University. As a general thing these Chinese students took part in outdoor sports lish and knew so well how to make themselves agreeable that they were

graduate of Yale and while at the university he was coxswain of the varsity ing the Harvard eight by a good margin Columbia University leads in having the greatest number of her Chinese sons connected with the conference Yale is second with about fifteen and Harvard ranks third, although some o he Harvard graduates took only law there after graduating from Yale or other universities first. The other uni

"That's a plucky pedestrian, any-

o try it again.". "Did the motorist accept the chalenge?"

heart to pass up a chance like that, but he was on his way in meet a train."